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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [GR](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: ENCOURAGING RESPONSIBLE TURKISH BEHAVIOR IN THE
AEGEAN

REF: A. ATHENS 1405

[B](#). ATHENS 1450

[C](#). ANKARA 2923

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Since the May 23 collision of Greek and Turkish F-16s over the Mediterranean, we have been encouraging the Turks to take steps to avoid a recurrence. On May 31, we urged MFA to avoid provocative actions after learning that the Turkish Embassy circulated a note to the diplomatic corps in Athens justifying its position on Aegean issues. Most recently, the Ambassador observed to MFA Undersecretary (and former Ambassador to Athens) Ali Tuygan on June 2 and PM Foreign Policy Advisor Ahmet Davutoglu on June 3 that recent incidents in the Aegean are not in Turkey's interest, and that any one of them could easily spin out of control. He urged the GOT to be more active in its efforts to avoid provocative actions and responses. Deputy Advisor to the President for National Security Affairs JD Crouch added weight to this message when he raised the issue with Turkish NSC Secretary General (and another former Ambassador to Athens) Yigit Alpogan on June 4. In all cases, we have been reassured that Ankara is taking the situation seriously and officials are looking for ways to work with the GOG to make the Aegean safer.

[1](#)2. (C) It does appear that the Turks are making an effort. Newspapers reported June 7 that an exercise Turkey had planned to conduct in the Aegean that coincided with Greek FM Bakoyannis' June 9-10 visit to Istanbul has been postponed. Both military and civilian officials expect Bakoyannis and FM Gul to announce the inauguration of the hot line between air force operation centers in Larisa and Eskisehir, and military officials have confirmed that they intend to honor the 1988 Papoulias-Yilmaz understanding by not conducting exercises in the Aegean in July and August. (Note: Training flights will still occur.) Although Turkish officials have not mentioned it to us, we were heartened to hear that the Turkish and Greek CHODs are discussing rules of engagement to make the Aegean skies safer (refs a and b).

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: Military air activity in the Aegean appears to us to be at about the same level as last year based on the statistics circulated by the Turkish Embassy in Athens and provided to us by MFA. We understand maritime incidents, like the one on May 25 when the two countries' coast guards' had a stand-off over fishing boats and nets near Imia/Kardak, occur every few weeks (albeit with less media coverage) and both sides manage them locally. The May 23 fatal collision reminded the Turks that the current stalemate over military activities in the Aegean is dangerous. Thus, we believe our current approach of pushing the two together to work out their own problems has the best chance to produce lasting

results in the long run, and we should avoid getting drawn into mediation. That said, post will continue making the need to ease tensions in the Aegean a prominent theme in the discussions with the government. End Comment.

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WILSON